



IT IS IN THE SHELTER
OF EACH OTHER THAT
THE PEOPLE LIVE.

Irish Proverb

February 3, 2014
The Honorable Mike Hawker
Member of the House of Representatives
Alaska Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
RE: HB 16 (Hawker) – Support

Dear Representative Hawker:

Community Connections is pleased to express our support for HB 263 which will extend the Senior Benefits Program for another four years. Community Connections serves the senior population on Prince of Wales, Metlakatla and Ketchikan. Our referral services identify hunger, or food insecurity, as a growing problem among the senior population in these areas.

The Hunger in America 2010 study found 42% of adult pantry and soup kitchen clients in Alaska were 50 and older. Of those pantry visitors 65 and older, 57.8% told us they experienced low or very low food security; they worry about or don't know if they will have enough food.

The study also found, of all pantry clients in Alaska:

- 43% had to choose between buying food and paying for utilities
- 45% had to choose between buying food and paying for rent or mortgage
- 35% had to choose between buying food and medicine

Among households with 1 senior member age 65 or older, 21.8% participate in a home delivered meal program. Agencies who deliver home meals have reported a 20% increase in requests for services. According to data from the Alaska Department of Public Assistance, food stamp recipients age 60 and over increased by 22% in 2009. The need is clear; our low-income seniors need help paying for basic needs.

We want all Alaskans to be hunger free, food secure. There is no question the Senior Benefits Program has helped Alaskan seniors put food on their tables, and will continue to do so with continued funding. We appreciate your leadership on this issue and wish to express our sincere thanks to you for helping Alaska Seniors live full and productive lives. We are also thankful to Representatives Millet, Lynn, Gara and Tuck for signing up to co-sponsor HB 263.

Thank you for all that you do for Alaska.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gardner
SDS Director
Community Connections
907-225-7825

721 Stedman St.
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
Tel: (907) 225-7825
Fax: (907) 225-1541

P.O. Box 420
Craig, Alaska 99921
Tel: (907) 826-3891
Fax: (907) 826-3892